



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

**Date:** 3/15/2004

**GAIN Report Number:** JA4021

## Japan

### Solid Wood Products

## Sick House: Wood for Kindergarten Buildings 2004

**Approved by:**

Kevin Latner  
U.S. Embassy

**Prepared by:**

Masaoki Nagahama

---

**Report Highlights:**

To assist local government administrators as they respond to these parental concerns about the sick house syndrome, the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science has developed new guidelines to encourage the use of wood in kindergartens.

---

Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Tokyo [JA1]  
[JA]

In addition to new regulations over volatile organic compounds (VOC), such as formaldehyde, recent consumer concerns about the “sick house syndrome” because of poor indoor air quality has lead to an increased demand for wood buildings, opening up opportunities in the construction of schools, including kindergartens.

The two-year kindergarten schools have more restrictive fire safety requirements than elementary, middle and high schools. Building fire-safety requirements for kindergartens were not traditionally interpreted to permit wood, particularly in 2-story buildings with nurseries on the second floor. In response to concerns about VOCs, parents have increasingly asked that schools, including kindergartens, be built of wood.

To assist local government administrators as they respond to these parental concerns about the sick house syndrome, the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science has developed new guidelines for kindergarten buildings to encourage the use of wood and confirm that wood can be used as long as the building complies with fire-safety requirements. According to the Ministry, the new guidelines provide an expanded interpretation of existing regulations.

(Source: The Yomiuri; March 1, 2004)

End of Report.